

The warfare between honesty and dishonesty will probably never end; that the fight against a proper medical law will ever cease, one can not say. The fight against the law always comes from physicians of two classes. No attacks upon the law originate with the laymen any more than do the laws or the desire to secure them originate with the laymen, for the simple reason that the laymen know practically nothing about it at all. All those who have desired to practice medicine and have been rejected, are antagonistic to the law which has kept them from their desires. All those who desired to run "diploma mills" are antagonistic to the law, for it prevents them from making unhallowed gain. These are the two elements which invariably unite in attacking this or any other medical law. But the trouble is, the people do not understand the facts, and so either sympathize with the man who clamors that he is persecuted, or believe his cry that there is a "medical trust" and are naturally, though mistakenly, resentful. At the present session of the legislature there will be introduced, undoubtedly, about the usual number of bills intended to emasculate the present law. Some of these will probably call for separate boards of examiners for every conceivable and inconceivable form of "school." Others will be amendments that will be very specious and will contain sections making the act about as useful as a means of protection as would be a lead sword in a duel. It is easy to foresee that these bills will be introduced, and therefore this presentation of the matter that we may refresh our minds and be prepared to set before our representatives data which they should have to guide them.

The essential provisions of the law are simple and of easy comprehension. The law says that any person who desires to treat the sick or injured must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the examining board the fact that he possesses enough knowledge of the human body, its make-up and its common disorders, not to do any harm. On matters of treatment all physicians differ, more or less; but this does not apply to facts of anatomy, physiology, chemistry, surgery and the like. There is a wide difference of opinion, for instance, as to the best way to treat almost every known disease, but there is no room for a difference of opinion as to the location of the heart and the liver. Obviously, any one so grossly ignorant of anatomy as not to be able to correctly locate the proper position of the heart and the liver, would be a danger to the people of the community and should under no circumstances be permitted to practice upon the ignorant sick. Those subjects upon which the various schools of medicine differ radically are excluded from the examination, the argument being that if the applicant demonstrates a sufficient knowledge of the subjects covering the make-up of the body and the essentials of its disorders,

he will know enough to do small harm, no matter what line of therapy he may think is best. Remember always that the medical act is a police law intended for the protection of the people, and for that alone. It is not intended in any way either to help or to hinder physicians; it is solely for the protection of the people against ignorance and quackery.

There has been in the past plenty of criticism of the Board of Medical Examiners and of their examinations, and doubtless there will always be plenty and to spare. Every one who fails to pass feels personally aggrieved and thinks that he has been injured. Every one whose credentials are defective—because some school has not played fair with him and has taken his money and graduated him in violation of some wise provision of the Association of American Medical Colleges—is also aggrieved and is complaining of the injustice of the law. And just so long as the board does its duty there will be plenty of kickers of both of these classes; but that is exactly what the law is intended to do—to exclude the unfit. The claim has been made repeatedly that "catch questions" were the order of the day. One may well doubt whether a single catch question was ever intentionally included in an examination. Each examiner asks questions which appeal to him, for one reason or another, and which he thinks cover the subject he has in hand. To another person, not following his line of work or thought, the questions may appear to be very difficult or even unfair. It is notorious in all states that new examiners ask difficult questions and mark the answers very low. We have had numerous illustrations of this in our own state, but in all such cases the board reviews the answers and in some instances has requested the particular examiner, in view of the difficult questions he has asked, to mark his papers very liberally. Furthermore, whatever criticism having any foundation in fact may have been advanced, is directed at the administration of the law and not at the law itself. It has been asserted that the legislature is to investigate certain acts of the board which have been reported to be not according to the law. That is all very well; if members of the legislature or any others wish to investigate, let them do so; if they find that any members of the board have done what should not have been done, let proper correction be made—but that is no reason for in any way altering the law to its weakening or detriment. The most preposterous allegations have been made in times past, and probably will be made in times to come. The absurdity of some of them is past understanding and is only exceeded by the absurdity of some of the answers to questions at the examinations. Here is one noted at the December examination which is so absolutely ridiculous that it passes belief. The question was: "Name the most prominent preventable diseases, and indicate the mode of prevention." The answer was: "Gonorrhœa; means of prevention is incontinence." Should that man be allowed to practice medicine?